



Top Row From Left: Cesar Lopez, Sandra Neri, Raul Esparza III  
Bottom Row From Left: Julie Morgan, and Lisa Banks

Todd Lizaak on one of his many location scouts.  
Todd may not have done the film, but he sure has that confident pilot pose mastered

## **The Illinois Film Office** *Committed to bringing film productions here to Illinois*

By Sandra Neri  
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During one of the hottest Chicago summers on record, I was busy three days a week doing an internship with the Illinois Film Office. Located in the James R. Thompson Center downtown Chicago, the very first thing I learned...you cannot bring scissors into the Thompson center. Yes, there are security checks. For those of you wondering, the film office is here to assist filmmakers (from the low-budget to the large scale studio production) in finding their perfect filming location in Illinois. The film office can also assist with helping filmmakers find crew members, actors, and industry vendors as well. Currently, the film office is offering a 30% film tax credit on qualified Illinois production spending. For more information on this, and application deadlines, go to:

[http://www.illinoisfilm.biz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11&Itemid=2](http://www.illinoisfilm.biz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11&Itemid=2)

**The film office is staffed with professionals who are all stars in my book! The team I had the pleasure of working with are:**

**Julie Morgan** - I met Julie during the interview for the internship; she is the special projects coordinator and has been with the film office for 13 years. Julie maintains the production guide, runs the Shortcuts competition, interviews chosen prospective interns, researches, and handles day to day tasks that are needed to keep the office functional. Julie mentions her most memorable celebrity encounter was when meeting Mel Gibson.

**Lisa Banks** - I reported to Lisa on a daily basis for assignments, and instructions, and she is the Production Coordinator (8 years in January). Lisa manages the Reel-Scout online locations database & location library, send out location packages, facilitate film requests & maintain the IFO website. When asked about her most memorable encounter, Lisa mentions a premiere party for "Public Enemies" with Johnny Depp and Christian Bale as being very "cool", but a location scout with Dennis Farina is her favorite celebrity encounter. It was during a scouting for the filming of Farina's movie "The Last Rites of Joe May", and Lisa remembers him as a "funny down to earth guy" who remembered her when they met again sometime later.

**Raul Esparza** - Assistant Deputy Director at the film office Since June 7<sup>th</sup> 2012, I assisted Raul with small office tasks, such as assembling production packets. Raul is a former location manager for several productions, still photographer for several productions, and visual effects location manager for the film "The Dark Knight". Raul still works as a photographer, and mentions his time with the production for "The Dark Knight" as his favorite on-the-job experience ...so far. Other productions

Raul has worked on include: The Vow, Transformers 3, Public Enemies, The Lake House, and Batman Begins, to name a few.

**Michele McGee** - A Tax Credit Specialist with the film office for the last 4 years, Michele is responsible for the effectiveness and efficiency of the IL Film Tax Credit program. Michele receives and processes applications for IL film tax credit, prepares all tax credits, transfer certificates, and reviews all financials submitted for the IL film tax credit. As if that were not enough, Michele also works with all stakeholders in the IL film tax credit to include, applicants, production companies, unions, IL legislators, film students, advertising agencies and so on. One of Michele's favorite things about the job at the film office is attending screenings.

**Cesar Lopez** - Film Tax Credit Manager and Diversity Officer at the IFO for seven months, Cesar is quick to point out that Illinois offers eligible productions a 30% transferrable tax credit on all qualified expenditures, including resident salaries (up to \$100,000 per worker). There is no cap on the amount of credit issued. The tax credit can be sold/transferred to up to 10 different entities and can be carried forward for five years. Cesar's favorite celebrity encounter has been "watching Kelsey Grammer work his magic as Tom Kane on the set of 'Boss'."

**Todd Lizak** - The film office's MVP award has got to go to Todd, unfortunately I did not get to spend a lot of time with him as he was preparing for his retirement. In Todd's own words- "My title for the past 6 years was Assistant Managing Director and I have worked in the Film office since 1998, so about 13 years. I actually retired in December of 2011 but stayed on to find my replacement. Before that I worked in the Governor's office for 22 years so when I came to the IFO I was the Government Liaison." Over the years I had many memorable experiences but the two that stand out the most were the scouts we did to lure Transformer 3 to Chicago and the day I spent scouting with Actress Faye Dunaway .

To lure Transformers 3 to Chicago, Todd and Joe Amari (senior location scout at that time) spent weeks going everywhere from the deep tunnels and sewer systems to the top of the Willis (Sears) Tower. "We saw every creepy tunnel in the Chicago land area and will never forget standing outside on the edge of the Willis tower."

On a different location scout, Todd mentions "The day I spent with Faye Dunaway was so intense ....What started out as a normal scout turned into a nightmare. Her producer slammed her hand while closing the car door and I had to spend several hours with her at the emergency room. Once released she wanted to continue the scout and it was a race to show her everything..." Todd has been involved with many film Organizations over the years and currently sits on the board of Governors for NATAS (National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences), The Emmy Folks for the past 10 years. He has also been elected as Vice President and then as Treasurer for SGMP (Society of Government and Meeting Planners) and has been a member of the IFP, Women in Film, MIFF to name a few film organizations over the years. Todd has also mentioned he has enjoyed his 34 years of working for the state, and plans to keep in touch with people he has grown to know over the years. I just want to thank Todd for his time, and the rest of the Illinois Film Office staff for all of their help, kindness, and professionalism. I really enjoyed the time I spent with all of you this summer!!

**What do the movies "Ferris Bueller's Day Off", "Home Alone", and "Transformers 3" all have in common?** They have all been filmed in Illinois, and these three films do not even scratch the surface of the very long list of movies filmed right here in our beautiful state. To view this list you can go to [www.illinoisfilm.biz](http://www.illinoisfilm.biz) , go to the tab named 'Filming In Illinois', go down to 'Made in Illinois'.

**Your Property could be in films!!** Did you know you could submit your property to be considered for a film being shot here in Illinois? You can! Just go to [www.illinoisfilm.biz](http://www.illinoisfilm.biz) , go to the tab for 'Locations', then go down to 'Submit a Location'. You will be prompted to fill out an online form. After you submit this form you will be contacted by the film office, and then asked to submit electronic photos of your property. There is no cost to you, and pictures of your property are put in the film office's online library, for directors and studios to view for a possible film location.

**If you need information about the film office, or you have questions on when deadline applications for internships are, email the film office at: [film@illinois.gov](mailto:film@illinois.gov)**